

SHORT NOTES

New Zealand-banded Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) breeds in the Seychelles

Over 14 600 Sooty Terns (*Sterna fuscata serrata*) have been banded under the New Zealand National Banding Scheme. The great majority of them was banded between 1961 and 1969 by Civil Aviation staff stationed on Raoul Island in the Kermadec group (29° 15' S, 177° 55' W) and during the Ornithological Society of New Zealand's anniversary expeditions to Raoul in the mid-1960s. Until recently, 145 of these birds were recovered, all on Raoul Island, during subsequent banding operations.

In July 1995 the Banding Office received the report of a recovery from Anna Maria Maul, a student working on Roseate Terns (*Sterna dougalli*) on Aride Island in the Seychelles, Indian Ocean (4° 12' S, 55° 40' E). During her work, on 30 June 1995, while checking a colony of Sooty Terns breeding in the same area, she discovered that one of the birds was wearing a band. The bird was caught and a closer inspection revealed that it was a New Zealand band, D-8767.

D-8767 was banded in Denham Bay on Raoul Island, as a non-flying chick, on 19 December 1961. At the date of recovery it was around 33 years and 6 months old, a respectable age for such a bird to be still breeding. The bird now holds the longevity record for all tern species banded in New Zealand. Previously the oldest recorded under the New Zealand National Banding Scheme were a 24 year old Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*), and a 26 year old White-fronted Tern (*Sterna striata*).

The Sooty tern is a circumtropical breeder, which ranges widely over subtropical waters and sometimes, under stress, into temperate waters (Turbott, 1990). Large colonies existed on Raoul Island, in the mid-60s numbering around 160 000 birds (Merton, 1970). Now, however, an estimated <10 000 birds are left on Raoul, the decrease attributed to predation by rats and cats (D.V. Merton, pers. comm.).

LITERATURE CITED

- MERTON, D.V. 1970. Kermadec Islands Expedition Reports: A General Account of Birdlife. *Notornis* 17: 147-199.
TURBOTT, E.G. (Convener) 1990. Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand and the Ross Dependency, Antarctica. Random Century, Auckland.

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